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Book Review: Look Who's Morphing

Is Tom Cho Playing with His Readers?

Reviewed by Sydney-based writer and editor of *Andromeda Spaceways In-Flight Magazine*, Edwina Harvey
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Look Who's Morphing by Tom Cho

Look Who's Morphing

by Tom Cho
Published by Giramondo Publishing Company (2009)
I.S.B.N. -13 978 1920882549

This is a collection of writings from Tom Cho. I hesitate to call them short stories, because there appears to be a biographical element in most of his offerings, so interwoven into what is obviously fiction that it's hard to define where reality ends and fiction begins. Unless Cho is playing with his readers and it's all fiction?

The inspiration to this anthology appears to be the author inserting himself into his favourite films such as: *Dirty Dancing*, *The Exorcist*, *The Bodyguard* and *The Sound of Music*. Film and television series references are liberally scattered throughout the text.

Cho's offerings are frequently short and punchy, running for only two or three pages, making the anthology easy to read if you're time-poor. His observations can be quite amusing, and this seems to be more his style in a collection of "Dinner with" writings. "Dinner With My Brother" seems to be a set up for a joke, while "Dinner With Auntie Ling and Uncle Wang" with Auntie Ling's observation that when she wants escapism she

watches Star Trek films and when she wants reality she watches National Lampoon films, was, in my opinion, one of the best pieces of humour in the piece. By comparison, Cock Rock - at over thirty pages the longest piece of writing in the collection - seemed to be nothing more than a young man's self-indulgent sexual fantasy.

While all writers draw their inspiration from somewhere, I was disturbed that Cho drew so heavily on well known movies as points of reference in his writing. Why couldn't he draw more on his own imagination? The blur between apparent fact and fiction left me feeling disoriented; I was happy to be entertained, but as the reader, had I become the butt of the joke?

Tom Cho

From [Tom Cho's Blog](#): Tom Cho is an artist who lives in Melbourne, Australia. He writes fiction, freelance as a writer and perform my words onstage. He's also produced arts projects, both as an independent producer and for Footscray Community Arts Centre, Melbourne Fringe and other organisations.

His first book is *Look Who's Morphing*, a collection of fictions. Published by Giramondo Publishing, *Look Who's Morphing* was released in April 2009. It was shortlisted for the 2010 Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book (South East Asia and Pacific), 2009 Age Book of the Year (Fiction) and Melbourne Prize Trust's 2009 Best Writing Award.

He has won numerous grants and awards for his fiction. His fiction has been published in Australia, U.S.A., Canada, Japan, Malaysia, Italy, France and Sweden. He regularly performs his work at festivals and other events, and has a PhD in Professional Writing from Deakin University.

He freelances as a writer, analyst and editor, primarily for the not-for-profit sector. His clients have spanned a range of sectors including the arts, community, health, business, local government and tertiary education. One of his specialties is writing funding proposals for not-for-profit organisations. I also write corporate and sales brochures, website content, speeches, case studies, annual reports, feature articles, media releases, and much more.



This interview with Tom Cho was part of the Melbourne Prize for Literature 2009 and is Courtesy of Melbourne Prize and YouTube



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From Amazon Books:  Tom Cho's collection of fictions and fantasies is all about morphing and transformation. Through the shape-shifting, we follow the narrator on his surreal adventures, which include dirty dancing with Johnny Castle, a rambunctious encounter with television's Dr. Phil, a job as Whitney Houston's bodyguard and another as a Muppet, a period in service with the von Trapp family in *The Sound of Music*, a totally destructive outing as *Godzilla*, and that high octane performance as a Gulliver-sized cock rock singer, complete with cohort of tiny adoring girls. As these fantasies of identity, sexuality and power unfold, the narrator, his family, and everything around him, morph and change, to the moment when the collection reaches its climax.

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The Gender Centre is committed to developing and providing services and activities, which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices. We offer a wide range of services to people with gender issues, their partners, family members and friends in New South Wales. We are an accommodation service and also act as an education, support, training and referral resource centre to other organisations and service providers. The Gender Centre is committed to educating the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues. We specifically aim to provide a high quality service, which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.